



TORRANCE GENERAL PLAN PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP #1

February 23, 2005

Meeting Workbook

PURPOSE

This workbook provides the Planning Commission with a structure to undertake the General Plan Update process and begin to document community issues, opportunities, and constraints.

At upcoming Commission meetings, we will build upon the materials provided in this workbook, as well as input received from the community at a May 2005 open house, to review, discuss, and evaluate land use alternatives for focused areas of the City and ultimately, to recommend a land use plan for the updated Draft General Plan.

This first Planning Commission workshop has five key purposes:

- 1) To introduce the Commission and members of the public to the General Plan preparation process;
- 2) To document Commissioners' expectations of the General Plan process;
- 3) To reflect upon and document Torrance's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and constraints; and
- 4) To define the concept of a "stable" neighborhood or district and identify areas of the City that meet that definition.
- 5) To receive community input.

At this Planning Commission workshop, as well as at 12 additional workshops scheduled throughout the next year on the General Plan, members of the public, through public comment and interaction with the Commission, will have the opportunity to describe those General Plan issues they feel are most important for Torrance's future.

Remaining sections of this workbook provide background for Commissioners and the public regarding topics to be discussed at the February 23, 2005 workshop.

Commissioners are encouraged to review this material and use the spaces provided to write comments or questions they would like to be addressed at the February 23, 2005 workshop.

Notes:

GENERAL PLAN BACKGROUND

GENERAL PLAN BASICS

At the most basic level, the General Plan provides a snapshot of Torrance today, a vision for Torrance tomorrow, policy guidance for decision-makers, and a work program that outlines the steps required to get from today to tomorrow. California law requires every city to adopt a general plan “for the physical development of the city, and any lands outside its boundaries which bears relation to its planning” (Government Code §65300). The California Supreme Court has suggested that the general plan is a city’s “constitution for future development”.

Much like the constitution, all other City policies, programs, and regulations pertaining to development flow from the General Plan. For example, subdivisions, capital improvements, development agreements, and many other land use decisions must be consistent with the General Plan. In addition, State policy guidelines suggest that the preparation and adoption of a general plan should¹:

- Identify community land use, circulation, environmental, economic, and social goals and policies as they relate to land use and development.
- Provide a basis for local government decision-making, including decisions on development approvals.
- Provide citizens with opportunities to participate in the planning and decision-making processes of their communities.
- Inform citizens, developers, decision-makers, and other cities and counties of the plans that guide development within a particular community.

THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

Torrance’s General Plan Update process gives residents and business leaders a welcome opportunity to take a long-term perspective regarding those issues that affect quality of life in the community. Long-range objectives are determined by projecting conditions and needs into the future. The General Plan then establishes policies for day-to-day decision-making based upon those objectives.

The City has established a number of objectives for this General Plan Update. They include:

- Identifying future uses for vacant properties.
- Ensuring fiscal stability through a diversified tax base.
- Maintaining a high level of public services and quality public facilities.
- Funding community improvements.
- Defining the highest and best uses for aging commercial properties.
- Identifying suitable sites for housing.

¹ Governor’s Office of Planning and Research. State of California General Plan Guidelines 2003.

- Responding creatively to increased traffic volumes.

A general plan is comprised of a series of elements, or chapters, specified in State law, including Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Open Space, Conservation, Noise, and Safety. The City may choose to combine certain elements or reorganize its General Plan in a manner that meets local needs. Optional elements may also be included that address topics of local concern, such as historic preservation. All elements must be evaluated and updated on a regular basis to maintain consistency.

The last comprehensive update to the Torrance General Plan occurred in 1992. More recent amendments to the Housing Element were completed in 2001, pursuant to State Housing Element Law, which requires this element to be updated every five years. Over the past 12 years, both the City and surrounding region have experienced significant growth and change that have affected the physical, environmental, economic, social, and demographic characteristics of the City.

The update process the City has embarked upon allows the community to reflect and comment upon current patterns of growth, and to update the current Plan's goals and policies and craft new implementation measures necessary to achieve those goals. The outcome of this effort will be a "blueprint" for future growth.

The key objectives of the planning process are to provide facts and information to the public regarding options for future development, and to change the community's perspective regarding future development to *proactive* from *reactive*. Working hand-in-hand with the public, City policy-makers will strive to reinforce existing neighborhood values and explore various ways to reshape Torrance in a manner that reflects and expresses the needs and values of its residents and businesses.

Notes:

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE GENERAL PLAN PROCESS

In this exercise, we will document the Planning Commission's expectations of the General Plan Update process. The objective will be to establish the needs of policy-makers and document the ideal conditions to work toward during the update process. The outcome will be criteria to measure a successful update program. Please take a few moments to document what you feel are the most important outcomes of this process.

PLEASE LIST YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR THE GENERAL PLAN PROCESS.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Everyone is encouraged to put forth their ideas. Judgment, in favor or against, should be suspended momentarily so that group members can put all ideas forward – no matter how ordinary or extraordinary – for subsequent consideration by the group.

[illegible]

Once the stable areas have been identified, we will be able to focus on the other areas that present an opportunity for change. At the workshop, we will distribute copies of the City's current General Plan map. The map will be used to allow Commission members to identify stable neighborhoods or areas. We are looking for first impressions at this time and will go through several rounds of discussion on this topic at future meetings, where we will begin to discuss the specific details of residential, commercial, and industrial development in Torrance.

Notes:

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